Zbigniew Białas

Mnemotechnics, "Projection" and Colonial Cartography: Enforcing a Comprehensibility of Strangeness

I have selected this text as emblematic of my academic interests of the last twenty years or so. The justification of the choice is threefold. Firstly, with reference to what the essay is about — it anatomizes cartographic discourse in the context of the exploration of Southern Africa. Secondly, with reference to methodology — it uses both structuralist and poststructuralist insights (which is to say I believe poststructuralism, at least in some of its manifestations, to be the extension of structuralism, rather than its annihilation). Thirdly, this essay can be inscribed within a wide field of colonial/postcolonial studies and the studies on travel writing.

1. Introduction

Cartographic discourse is not a form of imitation but rather a "representation conceived as imitation."[1] As such, it makes present again something that is absent by implication, or more precisely, it frequently functions as "a mnemotechnic sign that brings back something that happened not to be there at the moment, but whose existence in another place […] is not challenged".[2] In our context, the something that happened not to be there at the moment, existing in another place is the ground reality of the colonised land. The process of bringing back will in certain cases correspond to an act of "repetition" — not a sign for sign repetition, however, but rather a temporal process which "assumes difference as well as resemblance" functioning as a "regulative principle of rigor,"[3] but in fact asserting the impossibility of its own rigorous identity.

Though maps frequently function as mnemotechnic signs, there are cases where there will be no repetition, no quotation; instead, the cartographic process will be that of "precession." Benedict Anderson asserts that a colonial map was "a model

[1] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 123.

[2] De Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 123.

[3] De Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 108.

for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent."[4] Here, one needs to be cautious, however, not to automatically apply precession as that of Baudrillard's "precession of simulacra." Baudrillard, referring to the map metaphor, claims that it is today that abstraction is no longer that of the map, and simulation is no longer that of territory,[5] and he claims further that it is today that the territory no longer precedes the map, and henceforth it is the map that precedes and engenders the territory. The emphasis on "today," "no longer" and "henceforth" misleadingly juxtaposes today's post-modern situation of substituting signs of the real for the real itself — to the "before-today" which was different. I will claim, qualifying Baudrillard, that already in the beginnings of colonial cartography, precession of (what was ostensibly believed to be) simulacra was in full swing and the map of the Empire preceded, anticipated and engendered spatial reality.

To sum up provisionally this discursive circuit, for the sake of defining parameters: if for the cartographer the act of map-making was in the first place a highly non-neutral, post-perceptive articulation (repetition/quotation) of the colonial land preceded by the cognitive, cartological framework, it can be said that for the reader of the map the cartographic repetition/quotation was a cartological "precession" which engendered, clarified, defined and cognitively grammarised the colonial ground. Obviously, not to unnecessarily simplify matters, some of the map makers were map readers too. My object, then, is to problematise and exemplify aspects of the obvious perceptive/cognitive *non-neutrality* of the cartographic repetition/quotation and the paradoxical applicability of the "originating precession."

Here I have time to deal only with one aspect of the phenomenon. I have selected the concept of "projection" which is crucial for cartographical colonial discourse, not so much as a single concept — a particular mode of projection — but a fusion of several meanings derived from various practices, not always articulated jointly. I shall concentrate on the following projection-related aspects of the unavoidable cartological failure:

A) how accepting one method of projection is already a conceptual choice of a preferred method of distortion,
B) how the memories of the metropolis are projected onto the colony in an attempt at creating the "Empire of the Same"[6],
C) how one's biography or one's desired, idealised biography can be projected onto a map,
D) how an autotelic projection of "love" shapes the attitudes towards the colonised land.

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[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [revised ed.] (London: Verso, 1991), 107.

[5] Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in: Storey John, ed., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* (New York: Harvester, 1994), 361.

[6] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 153.

These various aspects may occur, as a result of the multiple transference of tropes, in the following combinations: conceptual/grammatical (A+B) and personalised, more obviously self-projective/biographical (B+C+D). Combined they form:
E) the log(o)istic projection of power.

2. Projection (A): The Map As Grammar

Je contemple d'en haut le globe en sa rondeur
Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*
Thou rondure of the world at last accomplished […]
O vast Rondure, swimming in space […]
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.
Walt Whitman, *Passage to India*

Maps function as grammars of the colonised territories but the word "grammar," as used here, should not be confused with what Franz Stanzel proposes generally as "grammar of fiction" which, in its basic assumption, denotes a rigorously systematic theory of discursive transmission, providing — by comprehensive tabulation — an inventory/archive of all possible discursive devices.[7] Rather, general grammar will be understood as "the science of the signs by means of which men group together their individual perceptions and pattern the continuous flow of their thoughts."[8]

From the moment of the realisation that the Earth is round and from the first attempts at solving the difficulty of representing the globe on paper, cartographers have been aware of the fact that it is impossible to transfer the world's curvature onto a flat sheet without accepting a mode of projection. It is very well for post--Romantic poets worldwide (hence the citations from Baudelaire and Whitman) to contemplate the globe in its roundness or to span the "vast Rondure" of the world with one's thoughts; for the cartographer the same *Rondure* is a catastrophe and a humiliating obstacle. Whether the cartographer chooses conformal, equidistant or equivalent projections,[9] whether he decides upon cylindrical or conical projections (i.e. whether he invents imaginary cylinders or cones wrapped around the globe or touching its surface at chosen points), the effect is always the same: that of visual distortion. Choosing one method of projection is, like in the *camera obscura* exploited by travellers to impress the indigene, conducive to choosing one preferred method of representation among many other theoretically possible ones that are discarded.

[7] Franz K. Stanzel, "Second Thoughts on 'Narrative Situation in the Novel': Towards a 'Grammar of Fiction,' " *Novel* (1977), 1, 263.

[8] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (*Les Mots et Les Choses*). (New York: Vintage, 1973), 73.

[9] In simplified terms: conformal projections reproduce a small area's shape, equidistant projections indicate accurate distances, equivalent projections show distinct surfaces; see Eduard Van Ermen, *The United States in Old Maps and Prints* (Wilmington: Atomium Books, 1990), 15—16.

What I said above about the function of projection corresponds, from the moment Wittgenstein coined his theories, to our understanding of the functioning of the language. Language is also a mode of representation, and for Wittgenstein there are as many different realities as there are grammars. Choosing a given language is not a key to "reality:" it is only conducive to selecting a specific mode of representation. In like manner, a mode of projection is already a chosen representational model and, in complicity with this "language," a selective, complex, abstract grammatical rule. Later, in order to impose the "contours," track "elevations," "delineations" etc., a whole set of minor, related "grammatical" rules has to be accepted if the representation of the land is to be at all readable. We may presume that in his own interest and by the logic of the lesser evil the cartographer applies the mode of projection that he *believes* is possibly most adequate, or to put it stronger, least inadequate. Yet, no matter how accurate the actual activity of observation is, the resulting map is, first and foremost, a function of the favoured projection and thus it can be objective only with regard to the chosen mode, and never to the represented land.

3. Projection (B): European Topophilia

Looking from our contemporary theoretical "vantage point" (which is equally suspect), we might proceed to state that the above, inescapable but technical understanding of the word "projection" does not limit the uses of the notion, when it comes to defeating the illusions of objectivity with respect to cartography. Another characteristic dimension of cartographic discourse consists in the applicability of a complex set of European descriptive self-projections.

Even if mapping was meant indeed as an attempt at understanding conceptually the threatening, unfamiliar environment, it was always defeated by the conceptual impossibility of avoiding topophiliac rhetorics while conducting observations.[10] In the case of colonial cartography, topophilia symbolises not only an attachment to a place, but it additionally means that acts of perception and cognition of the new land require an active invocation of the image of one's own land. This, incidentally, echoes the desire to which we have already alluded: to grasp the unknown by means of the known; an expectancy that the new land will be somewhat familiar, contiguous to Europe, with a computable touch of exoticism. The search for congruences explains — among other matters — the ubiquity of old toponyms as applied to new contexts. In order to overcome the jeopardy of "blank unfamiliarity"[11] the observer associatively endows the new land with qualities which are conceptualised and valorized by its absent but onomatomaniacally continued European counterparts. Yet,

[10] See Yi Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliff, NJ: 1974), and Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 16—17.

[11] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 15.

we cannot talk here of the attitude of a detached comparatist; rather, the values are already *projected* into the data, the surveyor's cognition is enslaved to re-cognition, and cartographic representation is a form of self-(re)presentation, which provides yet another link with the notions of precession and repetition, thus obliterating, in effect, the geographic authenticity of the new terrain. The European counterpart functions as an official "quotation" and the function of the quotation is to provide a shared experience of repetition. The new land, then, is not simply a faulty repetition enslaved to perception, but through the shared quotation it evokes a Barthesian notion of the pleasurable text conforming to cognitive precession.[12]

For the illustration I have chosen a few Southern African examples. For W.H.C. Lichtenstein Bechuana language does not sound just "soft," it sounds "as soft as Italian," whereas the Bechuana way of life is "bucolic." For John Barrow, on the other hand, the Bechuana life is slothful.[13] Whether described as slothful (Barrow) or bucolic (Lichtenstein), the point of reference and analogies are always and only European. Such descriptions may also reflect a European version of the Orient. For Dr. Holub the ragged peaks of the Victoria Falls (already a European reference) are additionally mythologised and orientalised: "[…] as often as I contemplated [the Falls] I could not help associating them with the idea I had formed of the hanging gardens of Semiramis."[14] This is not only a pleasure of quotation, but even more so a sign of the impossibility of escaping from the association. Holub admits he could not *help associating* the Falls "with the *idea*" he "had *formed* of the *gardens*," not with the gardens of Semiramis, because — naturally — supposing they existed, nobody knows what they looked like. It is the closest Holub ever gets to understanding the mechanism of quotation.

Col. Gordon perceptively undermines the legitimacy of the colonisers' appellations, when he says he climbed "the so-called Sneeuw Bergen, in Hottentot 'Noa Gore.'" He ironically comments on the fact that the Bushmen are called "Chinese" by the farmers.[15] But at the same time he is unable to find alternatives, and he must be at a loss later on when he is forced into impotently admitting e.g. that the Koraquas

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[12] Consider a relatively modern text by Albert Camus (1947) where he half-ironically bemoans the fact that Algerian cities, when compared to European cities overflowing with memories, seem to be only reflections, towns without a past, "The gentleness of Algiers is rather Italian. The cruel glare of Oran is more like Spain […] Constantine is reminiscent of Toledo," Albert Camus, "Short Guide to Towns Without a Past," in: Camus, *Summer*, trans. Philip Thody (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 42.

[13] W. H. C. Lichtenstein, *Foundation of the Cape; About the Bechuanas*, trans. Dr. O.H. Spohr [German orig. 1811; 1807] (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1973) and John Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* […], 2 vols. [London: A. Strahan, 1801] (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968).

[14] Dr. Emil Holub, *Seven Years in South Africa: Travels, Researches and Hunting Adventures* […], 2 vols., trans. Ellen E. Frewer (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1881. Repr.: New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1971) Vol. 2, 197.

[15] Patrick Cullinan, *Robert Jacob Gordon 1743—1795: The Man and His Travels at the Cape* (Cape Town: Struik, 1992), 34, 44.

are big Hottentots "with many Jewish and Chinese traits of physiognomy", marvelling that many Hottentots look "like Spaniards but with flatter noses",[16] or noticing that the Orange river does not flow strongly, but "as strongly as the Meuse at Maastricht."[17]

There is no need to lay further stress on this phenomenon, as sufficient exemplification can be found in every travellogue and in every colonial map. We are forced to conclude that the pleasure of quotation was integrated into colonial perception and escape from the memory system was cognitively unattainable.

4. Projection (C): "To Inform, And Not to Amuse Thee": Heroic Narcissism

> On and on, to the unmapped spaces,
> Onward, in search of the hidden places,
> Past lion's lair and leopard's den
> And swarming legions of savage men…
> F.C. Slater, *The Trek*

What matters, as Edward Said notices with respect to the Orient (but the same holds true for Africa) is not *whether* the West penetrated and possessed the Orient (and/or Africa), but rather *how* the West felt it had done it.[18] Projection, as a mode of cognition, is not limited to grammar and topophilia. It opens the realm of the narcissistic mingled with the sphere of nationalism. Projecting images of Europe in "the unmapped, hidden spaces," cartographers, travellers and writers had an excellent opportunity to project images of their own heroic and enterprising selves.[19] Another dimension of this autotelism derives from a powerful regulatory mechanism, i.e. the myth of the impatiently expectant metropolitan public. In accordance with the requirements of this assumption the producer of the map, a travellogue, a diary or a romance usually confabulates a lack of will to write, thus fending off the potential accusations of exhibitionism. He usually professes to yield to the solicitations of the public out of a sense of social duty.

At the end of the 19th century (1871), in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche forcefully articulated the theoretical dimension of this form of projection, suggesting firstly that the subject can think of itself as an image and an artistic projection of an artist, and secondly that the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon:

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[16] Cullinan, *Robert Jacob Gordon*, 117, 119.

[17] Cullinan, *Robert Jacob Gordon*, 44.

[18] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 148.

[19] Boehmer in her study cites the example of magic lantern shows used by European travellers (58—59). A magic lantern display for the natives is the literal application of projection of standardised European made images in the travelling situation, and it can be also understood metaphorically.

> […] wohl aber dürfen wir von uns selbst annehmen. dass wir für den wahren Schöpfer derselben schon Bilder und künstlerische Projectionen sind und in der Bedeutung von Kunstwerken unsere höchste Würde haben — denn nur als *ästhetisches Phänomen* ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt […][20]

This could, no doubt, lead to embracing the vision of aesthetic heroism and/or heroic narcissism because the underlying implication is that the enterprising subject — encouraged to perceive itself from the outside as an artistic projection — is an aesthetic phenomenon.

Dr. Holub, like so many others, articulates a regressive psychological tendency. He starts his travellogues with the explanation that "from the days of his boyhood" he had been "stirred" with the "desire" to devote himself to the "exploration of Africa", and whenever he came across 'the narratives of travellers" who before him "contributed anything towards the opening up of the dark continent," they gave a "more definite shape" to his "longings." In the second paragraph of the Preface Holub explains that in the year 1872 he, "a solitary individual," had the opportunity of "gratifying his wish." In Chapter One Holub relates how on approaching the African coast after his voyage he felt "a thrill of new life" and "a sudden shaking off of lethargy."

Visiting Africa may have been an anti-lethargic, thrilling gratification of an infantile desire, but writing about it required and implied a licence of social consent, in order to dispel the suspicion of self-glorification. The travellers/cartographers *are expected by the public* to produce their "recollection in tranquility," but the exercise of projecting one's biography onto a colonial map must be fortified with adequate simulations of scientific disinterestedness because writing from the perspective of re-absorption always is, by its nature, a narcissistic tale of success. In cartographical discourse instruction ostentatiously overshadows pleasure, and therefore, after the traveller is re-absorbed by Europe, his text has to be the result of: 1) yielding to a direct injunction, 2) social duty and/or 3) a task one performs unwillingly, after having continually been molested by society.

The first justification, especially pertinent with respect to the travellers of the 18th century, is an implicit or an explicit order. In his first *Letter on Hottentots*, Peter Kolb remarks:

> Sie hatten sich doch Hoffnung gemacht, ich würde auch von [Hottentotten] etwas schreiben, zumal ich so lange unter ihnen gelebt, mit ihnen täglich umgegangen und vieles bei ihnen gesehen habe.[21]

[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie, oder Griechenthum und Pessimismus*, in: Friedrich Nietzsche: *Gesammelte Werke: Dritter Band* (München: Musarion Verlag, 1920), 46.

[21] Peter Kolb, *Unter Hottentotten 1705—1713. Die Aufzeichnungen von Peter Kolb* (Tübingen: Erdmann, 1979), 23.

Le Vaillant states somewhat obscurely that he has been in some measure "constrained by solicitations which [he] ought to consider as commands."[22] What Le Vaillant explains in the supplement, John Barrow hastens to clarify in the beginning: the reason for his cartographic accomplishments and the subsequent study is an "order" from the Earl of Macartney.[23] Carl B. Wadstrom explains in the introduction that on returning to Europe in 1788, Sparrman, Arrhenius and himself were "summoned" before the British Privy Council in order to give a report.[24]

This Enlightened tradition still thrives in the middle of the 20th century. Laurens van der Post explains in the Preface to *Venture to the Interior* how one afternoon in 1949 "a letter summoned [him] to an annexe of Whitehall."[25] He was told to fly to Africa to a misleadingly and inadequately mapped area and prepare a report which was of paramount importance to the crumbling British Empire. "Whitehall" replaces the "British Privy Council," and the Empire is crumbling instead of thriving, yet, in view of the established tradition, the reaction of the narrator is predictable:

> I hope it is clear from what I have already said that whatever my own wishes, convenience and determination in the matter, I could not have refuse to go without doing violence to conscious convictions.[26]

Solicitations that are commands, summonses and personal injunctions are sometimes softened to yield to a more impersonal feeling of incumbency. Ever since the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, there exist time-tested safety devices against implicit and explicit charges of exhibitionism in writing about penetrating into new lands. Implementing Horatian ideas of combining the moral purpose (instruction) with pleasure, Defoe, in the Preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, justifies the enterprise of travel writing (and bogus travel writing for that matter), where the individual is rightfully at the centre of attention. The basis for such a fashioning of moral ideals was the illusion that writing an account of one's individual experiences can help the whole community. Swift, in like manner, adresses the "Gentle Reader" in the final, 12th chapter of *Gulliver's Travels*:

> Thus, gentle Reader, I have given thee a faithful History of my Travels for Sixteen Years, and above Seven Months; wherein I have not been so studious of Ornament as of Truth. I could perhaps like others have astonished

[22] François le Vaillant, *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa* [1790] (Repr. New York 1972), Vol. 2, 397.

[23] Barrow, *An Account of Travels*, Vol. 1, 9.

[24] Carl B. Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794. Repr.: New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), Part I, iii.

[25] Laurens van der Post, *Venture to the Interior* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967), x.

[26] Van der Post, *Venture to the Interior*, xi.

> thee with strange improbable Tales; but I rather chose to relate plain Matter of Fact in the simplest Manner and Style; because my principal Design was to inform, and not to amuse thee.[27]

Insisting on the author's veracity in a completely fictitious text, Swift — whom we can probably never believe — becomes moralistic:

> [A] traveller`s chief Aim should be to make Men wiser and better and to improve their Minds.[28]

Or, to invent their recollections, we might add.

Accordingly, Joshua Penny, the American sailor turned a rather poor writer, in the first paragraphs of his suspiciously Robinsonian Southern African memoirs, published originally in 1815, repeatedly stresses the element of social "obligation" and sees the publication of the booklet as "discharging his duty to the public." By consenting to write, Penny "yields to the repeated solicitations of his friends."[29] Dr. Holub, much in the same manner, was "urged" by friends "immediately to publish an account" of his travels, and then after some resistance and more journeying he was again so repeatedly "solicited to make public what [he] had seen"[30] that, eventually, he yielded. Likewise, when at the end of the narrative he refers to a political pamphlet that he circulated in 1875 on the annexation of Transvaal by the British government, he immediately says that "that little publication […] was issued not simply at [his] own option, but by the desire of several influential men in South Africa."[31]

True to the rules of the game, Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain — although a fictitious figure — gives in exactly to the same solicitations. Enumerating four reasons why he is obliged to write the account presented in *King Solomon's Mines*, he stresses simply by way of setting the priorities right: "First reason: Because Sir Henry Curtis and Captain John Good asked me."[32] In *Allan Quatermain* editorial responsibility is removed by several instances: Quatermain's narrative is appended by *By Another Hand* (Henry Curtis), and that in turn by a *Note* (George Curtis), to be finally superseded by an afterword entitled: *Authorities*. Even this is signed: *The Writer of Allan Quatermain*, not "H. Rider Haggard." In *She*, the narrator, Horace Holly, explains that he writes down the memoirs "not with a view to immediate

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[27] Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 291.

[28] Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, 291.

[29] Joshua Penny, *The Life and Adventures of Joshua Penny* (New York, 1815. Repr.: Cape Town: South African Library, 1982), 3.

[30] Holub, *Seven Years in South Africa*, Vol. 1, 2—3.

[31] Holub, *Seven Years in South Africa*, Vol. 2, 442.

[32] H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* [1885]. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 2.

publication" but only an eventual publication after the protagonist's death.[33] This reservation, i.e. to make the text public after the narrator's death is a double shield by distancing the author even further from the accusation of exhibitionism because eventually the editor — not the narrator — decides *not* to withhold the information and publishes the marvellous story.[34]

An example of inadequately suppressing, and thus more visibly articulating, the narcissistic impulse is provided by Dr. Holub. The trouble with the Bohemian traveller is that most of the time he visits places already discovered, and even when he is not travelling along well-established routes, he does not break new ground, since there are always either some Boers or missionaries around. Nevertheless, Holub desperately wishes to maintain the illusion of discovery. For over four hundred pages he never refers to cartography, but instead stresses his *impromptu* consultations with randomly met Black guides. When he eventually does mention a map, it is as if he were a map-maker, not a map-user:

> Although I had succeeded somewhat better than during my former journey in making a cartographical survey of the route, many obstacles with which the reader has been made acquainted in the previous pages, prevented me from making a map as complete as I desired.[35]

Holub makes a mistake here because earlier in his narrative he discloses that he is not really in a position to be a producer of a map. Although, like John Barrow, he dutifully buys and carries a sextant, he does not know how to use it:

> I had also procured a sextant, the use of which was explained to me by an old ship's officer, but unfortunately I was unable to turn either the instrument, or the instruction I had received about it, to much account, as I was baffled in all my inquiries to obtain a copy of the Nautical Almanack.[36]

There exist some instances where a statement is clearly autotelic without any textual ploys to fictively supress its nature. Louis Pisani expects to be considered a discoverer. Among the many gross falsifications of his map several are connected with appropriating the discovery. At the top left corner the inscription suggests, *La nation de Damoraques Scoperto nell' 1785 de L.A. Pisani* (The nation of Damoraques discovered in 1785 by L.A. Pisani). The top right corner area suggests: *Regno del Imperio de Monamotapa que sitroeva gli Monti d'Oro Scoperti dell'Pisani nell'Anno 1788—1789* (The Empire of Monamotapa […] discovered by Pisani in 1788—1789). Port Natal is also discovered by Pisani (in 1782), so is the Bay of Natal and numerous other

[33] H. Rider Haggard, *She* [1887] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 299.
[34] Rider Haggar, *She*, 9.
[35] Holub, *Seven Years in South Africa*, Vol. 1, 423.
[36] Holub, *Seven Years in South Africa*, Vol 1, 218.

places marked on the map with the name of the fake explorer.[37] Oscar Norwich, the editor of Pisani`s map, concludes univocally:

> The map embodies many historical events and geographic features of the period, but it also attributes to Pisani a host of discoveries, not one of which is historically correct.[38]

If the actual extent of Pisani's or Holub's penetration of Africa is not impressive, the ways in which they project their narcissism onto the map helps understand the exploratory mind.[39]

One cartographer who did not conform to the narcissistic regularity was Col. Gordon. He behaved like Rider Haggard's fictitious heroes would have wished to behave — i.e. withholding the publication of his atlas and memoirs till after death:

> He had during his life been solicited on the part of the Emperor and Stadtholder, as well as many other men of Science, to publish them during his life, this he declined, and has left them for the advantage of his family.[40]

It must have been rather unusual not to yield to these solicitations, something almost suggesting an epistemological treason. But then Col. Gordon commited suicide in 1795 after — how aptly — being accused of military treason.

5. Projection (D): Love

> I soothe myself by desiring what, being absent, can no longer harm me.
> Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*

"It is love the subject loves, not the object," asserts Roland Barthes in his study *A Lover's Discourse*, and Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America* elaborates on "Love" as one of the key concepts in the confrontation with alterity. Leaving aside the issues of "love" towards the human Other, I would like to signal the meaning of "Love" as another autotelic dimension in the context of our study, as both the

[37] Pisani's map, if anything, increases chaos by the fact that the inscriptions are written indiscriminately in Dutch, Italian or English, and it is difficult to discern a governing principle of particular linguistic choices.

[38] Oscar Norwich, *Maps of Southern Africa* (Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1993), 24.

[39] In K.A. Appiah's views on colonisation, the impression one gains is that of "an essentially shallow penetration;" *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7; and if this is not true in every case, it is probably true in the case of Holub, Pisani or everyone else who overrates the extent of his significance.

[40] Cullinan, *Robert Jacob Gordon*, 11.

explorer and the farmer exhibit not only narcissism but also an amorous attachment to the land.

In Michel Tournier's Robinson story, *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*, the Robinson-figure (Crusoé), combines the topos of the explorer and the farmer.[41] Initially he surveys the island from the "sommet du chaos,"[42] names it Speranza (cf. Cape of Good Hope), keeps a log-book, and then he copulates directly with the discovered land sowing his seed on the ground:

> [p]rivé de femme, je suis réduit à des amours *immédiates*. Frustré du détour fécond qui emprunte les voies féminines, je me retrouve sans délai dans cette terre qui sera aussi mon dernier séjour […] mon sexe a retrouvé son élément originel, la terre.[43]

And later:

> je fécondais cette terre comme j'aurais fait une épouse.[44]

But such a conjunction of love-projection is not always achieved. If, simplifying matters, we tried to summarise in what way White farmers and explorers perceive their love as worth requiting, there seems to be a constitutive difference in their approaches. The farmer seems to believe in the patriarchally monogamic relation between the man and the soil: he loves the soil because it is his; the soil is his because he loves it.[45] As a result, he is allowed to force the land to give birth, and any financial question in connection with legitimating ownership thus understood is seen as less relevant.

The explorer/cartographer does not display the same self-propelling *status quo*-logic typical of the farmer. The explorer loves the land because he can discover it, penetrate it, inscribe it, describe it and "name the offspring." Because one effect of exploratory penetration is degradation of the "loved" object and elimination of its virginal quality, the unresolved predicament with mapping wild gardens is that the more they are mapped the more they are robbed of their romantic potential.[46] To put it otherwise: the explorer/cartographer loves the land and conquers it because it is not his; yet it cannot be legitimately his because he is a conquerer. There is no

[41] For a detailed analysis cf. Erhard Reckwitz, *Die Robinsonade: Themen und Formen einer literarischen Gattung* (Amsterdam: Verlag B.R. Gruener, 1976), 597—608, and Colin Davis, *Michel Tournier: Philosophy and Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 9—33.

[42] Michel Tournier, *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 17.

[43] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 111.

[44] Tournier, *Vendredi*, 185.

[45] See J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing; On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 86.

[46] See David Bunn, "Embodying Africa: Woman and Romance in Colonial Fiction." *English in Africa* 15/1, (May 1988), 9.

place here for monogamic feelings, the explorer is interested only in the surface of the earth and its embellishments (natural and human alike). The result is a sequence of conquests repeated time and again.

If we are dealing with projections, there is a conceptual possibility of projecting love towards the land into love towards the map. The narrative tradition of the love affair between the map maker and his map can be traced back to *Moby Dick*. Captain Ahab takes the maps out of the locker almost every night (a mystery or a forbidden pleasure) and spreads the charts on the screwed down table. Then he studies them intently. In the eye-intensive voyeuristic intercourse between the wrinkled Ahab and the wrinkled map even a pewter lamp participates, tracing lines and courses of shadows "upon the deeply marked chart of [Ahab's] forehead."[47] Since the ocean is a female principle, the studying of the map simulates a mortal love affair between Ahab and the ocean.

6. Projection (E): From Logos to Logo

> …here and everywhere else on this continent there would be no resistance to my power and no limit to its projection.
>
> J.M. Coetzee, *Dusklands*

Benedict Anderson in the revised edition of *Imagined Communities* talks of the map's eventual "logoization" of space.[48] Anderson's concept corresponds to Boelhower's idea of "logocentric organisation of the land."[49] Graham Huggan, in the same context talks of the hierarchization of space.[50] The stress is slightly different — though the notions are complementary. In the case of the hierarchization of space the emphasis is shifted from naming to ordering, but the two concepts only exist in complicity with each other: it is the hierarchical inscription of the word on the map that makes a map a paradigm of colonial discourse.

But the hierarchised word — which from Biblical times onwards signifies supreme power — implies also that the key feature in the success of the colonial enterprise consisted in achieving and maintaining domination over the means of communication.[51] This assertion can be qualified further (as is specified for instance in *The Empire Writes Back*) into a concession that in colonial practice the projec-

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[47] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick or the Whale* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1992), 215.

[48] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 176.

[49] William Boelhower, *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13.

[50] Graham Huggan, "Decolonizing the Map: Post-Colonialism, Post-Structuralism and the Cartographic Connection," in: Adam Ian and Tiffin Helen, eds., *Past the Last Post*; *Theorizing Post--Colonialism and Post-Modernism* (New York: Harverster Wheatsheaf, 1993), 81.

[51] See Tzvetan Todorov: *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* [*La Conquête de l'Amérique: la question de l'autre*; 1982], trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper, 1992), *passim*.

tion of power frequently meant maintaining a domination of writing over orality.[52] Colonial cartography is, in effect, an attempt at superimposing hierarchised writing over ground reality. The fact that ground reality is an unknown/unknowable factor is as irrelevant in this attempt as the fact that the meaning of orality is beyond comprehension of the colonial governour. It is, after all, the *belief* in reality, not reality itself that renders the *project* worthwhile. And this introduces, last but not least, a historical dimension to the understanding of projection. In the Renaissance, or rather — starting from the lexis of the Renaissance (as exemplified by Richard Brome's play *The Antipodes* — the phrase "[p]rojectors with bundles of papers" or "projectors of the country" refers to enterpreneurs, especially those who intend to form monopolies.[53]

In the Epilogue to *The Conquest of America*, Tzvetan Todorov concludes that in European civilisation, *logos* has conquered mythos.[54] The desired, if hypothetical, epilogue to colonial cartology is reached with its depoliticisation, i.e. the moment when the map starts functioning non-problematically as a recognisable and generally accepted *logo*, instead of *logos*. Mythification entails an evaluative assumption of innocence, so it is at the end of the road leading from *mythos*, through *logos*, to *logo* that the colonial cartological project may be considered as having been completed.

Source

Białas Zbigniew, "Mnemotechnics, 'Projection' and Colonial Cartography: Enforcing a Comprehensibility of Strangeness," in: Kalaga Wojciech and Rachwał Tadeusz, eds., *Memory and Forgetfulness: Essays in Cultural Practice*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1999, p. 9—23.

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[52] Bill Ashcroft *et al.*, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 1989), 81.

[53] See Anthony Parr, ed., *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 297.

[54] Todorov: *The Conquest of America*, 253.